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DEPT FOR AF/C AND AF/RSA,  
ADDIS FOR AU MISSION

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SUBJECT: AU ASSESSES BURUNDI'S CAPABILITIES FOR SOMALIA  
DEPLOYMENT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Ann Breiter for reasons 1.4(b)and(d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: African Union (AU) military leaders visited Burundi on June 10-13 to assess Burundi's readiness for participation in the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). AU Major General Benonbuta Biraaro and his team inspected two battalions and met with Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Germain Niyoyonkana to explain Burundi's role in the AMISOM mission. Biraaro stressed in a private conversation with Ambassador Moller that he understands the Burundian military's wish to deploy a battalion sized force in the very near term. Biraaro continued that Burundi's role in Somalia will be to provide force protection to airports, seaports, and various military installations in Mogadishu and the surrounding area, opining that the Burundian military does not yet possess sufficient expertise or equipment to perform more complex missions in Somalia. The AU contingent estimated that if additional training were to begin the week of June 18, a Burundian battalion could be ready for deployment by the end of July. However, deployment is contingent upon obtaining financial and material support for the Burundian force. END SUMMARY

12. (SBU) AU Major General Benonbuta Biraaro led an eight person contingent to Burundi June 10-13. The team, which included representatives from the US, British, and French armed forces, inspected two Burundian army battalions on June 12 to determine their capabilities in advance of their proposed deployment as part of AMISOM. The group also met with MOD leadership to determine its outlook on the mission and explain the AU's vision for Burundi's role in Somalia. General Biraaro noted in a meeting with Ambassador Moller that the GOB is determined to deploy at least one battalion. Biraaro acknowledged that there was strength in numbers and that, given that the entire AMISOM mission would require approximately 8,000 troops, he was reluctant to discourage the GOB's intentions to send at least a battalion. (Note: A battalion consists of 800-1000 soldiers. End Note) Biraaro continued that a battalion sized force would also serve as a strong signal of support for the Ugandan military units already serving in Somalia as part of AMISOM.

13. (SBU) The AU has proposed that Burundi's forces will serve as force protection units for military installations, airports, and seaports to allow the Ugandan military already serving in that capacity to engage in more complex missions. This type of mission may not require an extensive buildup of equipment, Biraaro suggested, noting that the more equipment involved, the more training which would be required. This training requirement could delay deployment. The AU's goal is to deploy a ready-equipped, self-sustaining force, said Biraaro. He stressed that an unsuccessful deployment could

be very damaging for Burundi.

¶4. (C) The AU team recognized that the Burundian military currently lacks the equipment to carry out its mission in Somalia. However, they noted that force protection units have fewer equipment needs than units engaging in combat or conducting patrols. They listed body armor (self-protection), water capabilities (self-sustainment), basic communication, and transportation as the fundamental needs for force protection. Given plans for Burundi to undertake static security, a list of needed equipment which Burundi's MOD submitted to the AU and potential donors could be shortened considerably to provide the basic needs and necessary equipment for Burundi's proposed mission to Somalia. Biraaro recommended that training for one battalion begin the week of June 18 with the intent of deploying at the end of July. Subsequent deployments could be made after a second battalion is trained for more complex AMISOM missions, and could be made in company level increments.

¶5. (C) The AU team acknowledged that this deployment will be costly and the Burundians are unable to fund its mission. Biraaro recommended that the Burundians find a sponsor who can coordinate and lead them through the entire process, as they have no experience with this type of mission. He stressed that the Ugandans are alone in Somalia and a Burundian deployment could serve to motivate other AU member states to become Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs). In a press briefing subsequent to the AU's briefing with the Ambassador, a Burundian military spokesman said the AU team confirmed the Burundian army's technical competence and "the first battalion could leave in July" for Somalia.

¶6. (SBU) In a meeting with Charge on June 14, Burundi's Minister of Defense, Lieutenant General Germain Niyoyonkana,

insisted that Burundi could not send a force smaller than a battalion to Somalia. He maintained that his forces must have the capability to defend themselves if attacked, rather than rely solely on support from other peacekeeping forces. He expressed appreciation for US support of Burundi's mission and urged the US to coordinate with other donors to ensure that Burundi obtained the needed financial and material support to deploy expeditiously. Charge and the Embassy Acting Defense Attache (A/DATT) explained that while the United States could not provide weapons and ammunition, it could provide some equipment and support services. They suggested that a smaller force would require less material support, and thus the Burundians might be able to deploy more quickly. The A/DATT noted that the AU presently envisioned Burundi's role as that of providing static security and perimeter defense.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The Minister of Defense remains adamant that Burundi will not consider sending a force smaller than a battalion. While his stated concern is to ensure maximum security for his troops, we believe another reason is Burundi's desire to be perceived as on equal footing with other Troop Contributing Countries. Although Burundi understands that the AU will take the lead on operational planning, it is clear that the GOB still looks to the US to take a lead role not only in providing major support, but also in convincing other prospective donors to step forward with pledges of assistance. END COMMENT  
BREITER